

The Voice of Americanism

Honolulu Japanese Merchants' Association,
Post Office Box 853, Honolulu, T. H.
Dear Sirs:

Your letter of the tenth of February enclosing a copy of the Resolutions adopted at a meeting of the Honolulu Japanese Merchants' Association on the eighth of February, 1920, has received the consideration of the Trustees of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association.

We note that your Association considers that the demands presented by the Federation of Japanese Laborers are just and reasonable and you regret that the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association has taken an attitude of opposition against said demands.

In reply to your letter and the resolutions of your Association we would state:

The three principal items in the demands of the Japanese Federation of Labor are:

FIRST: That the wage of the lowest paid man on the plantations be \$1.25 per day and that there shall be a like increase, or 62.34 per cent, in the wages and salaries of all other employees.

SECOND: That the present bonus system remain unchanged except:

THIRD: That the provision of the bonus system, requiring a laborer to work 20 days a month in order to participate in the bonus, be changed to 15 days per month.

Let us first consider the third demand. It has been the experience of plantation employers for many years past that as the day wage increases the turnout of labor decreases; and while the principal object of the bonus system is to provide laborers with a substantial and generous increase in their compensation when the price of sugar is high, we also had in mind a provision which would tend to induce a good turnout of laborers.

We think that there is no injustice in asking an able-bodied man who is provided, free of charge, with house, fuel and medical attendance, to work 20 days out of a month, or a trifle over 4½ days per week. Prominent Japanese, to whom this question has been submitted, have stated that the 20 day provision is a reasonable one.

Let us now consider the first and second demands.

At \$1.25 per day the wages of the lowest paid, least skilled, man on the plantation would be \$32.50 per month. The bonus for January was at the rate of 151.5%, or \$49.24, making the total earnings of said man \$81.70 for the month. The plantation would retain approximately 25% of the bonus and disburse as a bonus payment 115%, so that the \$1.25 man would have received as payment on account of bonus for January \$37.38, making the total wage and bonus \$69.87, and the balance, depending on the price of sugar for the year, would be paid at the end of the bonus year.

This month, February, the bonus will be 256.5%, or \$83.35, for a man on wages of \$32.50 per month, making the total earnings of such a man \$115.85 for the month. The plantation retains approximately 25% of the bonus and disburses as a bonus payment 190%, so that the \$1.25 man would receive as payment on account of bonus \$61.75, making the total wage and bonus to be paid him for February \$94.25.

The above is what the Federation of Japanese Labor demands shall be paid by the plantations to their lowest paid, least skilled men, without regard to the cost of production and marketing of the sugar.

We do not believe that anyone, even the most ardent agitator in the ranks of the Federation of Labor, thinks that the plantations can afford to meet such an increase and maintain their existence.

Let us consider what is now actually being paid to the lowest paid laborers on the plantation.

The bonus for the month of January was 151.5% and the advance on account thereof 115%. A \$20.00 per month man would receive:

Wages .. .	\$20.00
Bonus Advance .. .	23.00
Total .. .	\$43.00

and the balance of the bonus will be paid him at the end of the year, depending on the price of sugar.

The bonus for the month of February is 256.5% and the advance on account thereof 190%. A \$20.00 per month man will receive:

Wages .. .	\$20.00
Bonus Advance .. .	38.00
Total .. .	\$58.00

and the balance of the bonus will be paid him at the end of the year, depending on the price of sugar.

It should be borne in mind that the \$20.00 per month men are a very small minority of the employees on the plantations.

The value of the house, fuel and medical attendance furnished varies on the different plantations, but it certainly is not less than \$10.00 per month on the average.

All men not blinded by passion or prejudice must concede that the compensation of plantation hands is not only adequate but most generous. In this connection it is interesting to note that, notwithstanding the fact that the Japanese have been on strike for a month, we have been informed and read in Japanese newspapers that there have been very few requests made of the Federation of Labor for assistance, and laborers have stated that they have sufficient money on hand to live in idleness for some months. This is an absolute contradiction of the charges made concerning the impoverished condition of the laborers and their inability to save.

We are forced, therefore, to the conclusion that this strike was not brought about by the conditions of employment. From statements made by Japanese plantation hands to managers, we know that the majority of the men are satisfied with their earnings and conditions of employment and do not want to strike, and if free to exercise their own wills would return to work immediately.

The movement was started by the Japanese newspapers and agitators, aided and abetted by the Japanese school teachers and priests.

The Federation has impressed upon the laborers the absolute necessity of obeying their leaders and, to keep them in line, has appealed to the Japanese national spirit and has made use of the well known national feelings and characteristics of the Japanese to hold them together. Working upon the sentiments of their less educated fellow countrymen, they have effected an organization which is a menace to every man, woman and child of this Territory of whatever nationality.

Perhaps you are not aware of some of the workings of the Japanese organization. We do not profess to know all that is going on, but certain things have come to our notice.

The Japanese on the plantations struck on order of the Federation of Labor without making requests or demands of any nature. The excuse that they were instructed to furnish was that the Filipinos were preventing them from working. Then when ample protection was afforded and they could no longer hide behind this pretense, they were told to say that they were laying off to show the Filipinos that they were with them and would return to work shortly. All the while they were perfecting their organization and appointing surveillance committees on each plantation.

When this was completed to the satisfaction of their leaders, they then assumed an attitude of complete indifference, and, still without demands in most instances, absolutely refused to work.

Now as to the methods adopted by the Federation of Labor: We soon became cognizant of the oath taken by the men that if one man should be discharged all would consider themselves discharged. Statements of this nature have been made by the men to the managers secretly and at night and that they wished to work but were bound by their oaths.

Then we had the by-laws of the Federation of the Island of Hawaii, and without doubt each Island Federation has adopted similar rules and regulations. We found therein a provision that any member failing to obey the orders of the Federation would be reported to the officials of his permanent domicile in Japan, where his family would be scorned, ridiculed and ostracized. Because of the characteristics of the Japanese people, no more powerful weapon for keeping plantation laborers in line could have been devised by the Federation leaders.

That this was intended as a real threat is shown by the advertisements in the Japanese newspapers where Japanese who have continued to work at Waipahu are advertised and held up to the scorn of the Japanese community here and at home.

The evidence of the Federation's hold upon the laborers accumulates from day to day.

At Waialua in the week preceding the 19th of January, fields, in the Waialua and Mokuleia sections of the plantations were burned preparatory to cutting. On the following day the Japanese promised that they would harvest these fields and did harvest the fields in the Waialua section. Late Monday afternoon one of the Federation agitators, reported to have been Mr. Fujitani, went to Waialua and ordered the Japanese not to turn out on Tuesday to harvest the field at Mokuleia.

On Tuesday the Japanese did not turn out to harvest said field.

And yet we read in the Japanese newspapers how the Japanese laborers at Waialua kept their promise.

Again at Waialua we hear of the skilled men earning large salaries and not interested at all in this strike, working only with the permission of the Federation of Labor.

One of the fundamentals of all modern governments is that an accused person may not be tried or convicted until he has been faced by his accuser. At Kahuku we find an alien race, setting up its own tribunal to deal with its own people. The Japanese Federation of Labor provided a receptacle wherein any one could place the name of any Japanese who might be seen speaking to a white employee of the plantation. This is comparable only with the Lion's Mouth in the Duke's Palace and to the procedure of the Spanish Inquisition.

And yet the "Nippu Jiji" states that the attitude of the plantations is that of the "despot of the dark ages."

The statements of the Federation are full of misrepresentation and deceit. In the "Voice of Labor" it is stated, for instance, that the Hawaiian Agricultural Company charges \$4.00 a cord for firewood delivered to laborers. The truth is that five men were charged the nominal sum of \$4.00 per cord for fuel for the reason that their wives do the laundry work for the district. One poi manufacturer and one "tofu" manufacturer were charged for firewood. The "Voice of Labor" fails to mention, however, that the Hawaiian Agricultural Company is now, and for a long time past, has been supplying its laborers with beef for only 12½¢ per pound and milk at only 8¢ per quart. The price of beef in Honolulu ranges from 20 cents to 40 cents per pound, and milk from 16 cents to 20 cents per quart.

Such statements by the Federation of Labor only serve to furnish ammunition to those in this community who aver that the Japanese are not appreciative and have no sense of gratitude.

For a whole month the plantations on this Island have refrained from taking any action toward requesting the bulk of their laborers either to work or give up their living quarters. While occupying the plantation houses free of charge, receiving plantation fuel, having water pumped to their houses and receiving plantation medical treatment, these laborers, on order of the Federation, have refrained from working, and to further aggravate the situation, patrolled the camps of other laborers and prevented those of other nationalities who desire to work from so doing.

As to the movement being an anti-American one, we firmly believe that it is so from the manner of its inception, from the personnel of those behind it, from the statements in the Japanese press and from the speeches of those officials of the Federation of Labor whom we have been able to check.

The Waialua Japanese Labor Union emblazons its letter paper with the flag it loves and will follow—not the Stars and Stripes, but the Rising Sun of Japan—crossed with the cane knife and the hoe.

All of which we submit shows the strangle hold of the Federation on the laborers, which we propose to break, no matter what the cost.

We are sorry that the good men must suffer with the bad, but there can be no compromise or deviation from the lines that we have laid down.

Very truly yours,

Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association
By Royal D. Mead, Secretary
February 18, 1920